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THESIS

WHY DO MILITANT GROUPS EXPERIENCE INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT?

by

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December 2016

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Under what conditions are militant groups more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict? This paper seeks to contribute to the rebel group and political violence literature by drawing upon the insights of previous scholarship in these areas, and from organizational theory and social identity theory, to identify these conditions. These factors are then tested using a sample of militant ethno-political groups in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) collected within the Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior (MAROB) Database.

The results of multiple regression analyses indicate that these groups experience a systematic increase in the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict when they experience a loss of unified leadership, when they attempt to govern territory, when they obtain legal recognition from the state, when they receive foreign assistance, and when they promote authoritarian views. The results also demonstrate that state violence against these groups had no consistent influence on their likelihood of experiencing intra-organizational conflict. These findings point the way for additional research on the interactions between ethnic identity and state violence. They also hold important implications for policymakers and military planners, as events, policies, or actions which affect the above factors can be expected to affect levels of intra-organizational conflict. In contrast, the direct use of state violence appears unlikely to generate systematic increases or decreases in group intra-organizational conflict.

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WHY DO MILITANT GROUPS EXPERIENCE INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT?

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MAR	Minorities At Risk database
MAROB	Minorities At Risk Organizational Behavior database
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
R	R Statistical Computing and Graphics Language
RStudio	R Language Programming Shell

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. WHY STUDY ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT?

Intra-organizational conflict, particularly when it passes the threshold of violence, is an indication of organizational dysfunction, reduced capacity to dedicate resources to any external missions, and an increased likelihood of division into splinter groups. Policymakers and militaries with a stake in defeating or supporting militant groups, and scholars trying to understand the behavior of these groups, therefore have a natural interest in understanding which conditions, events, policies, or actions tend to increase or decrease internal conflict. For instance, decision makers supporting a counterinsurgency effort may find it advantageous to increase such internal conflict to make groups less effective.[1] A group experiencing internal conflict may also be more susceptible to policymaker or military attempts to buy off, co-opt, or otherwise pacify part of the once-united group.[2]

On the other hand, policymakers or military planners may want a group to be stable and united, and therefore may want to support the conditions which would make the group less likely to experience internal conflict. From the perspective of supporting the group in achieving aims, this is relatively straightforward. However, even those working against a group might want it to be united. Having a unified rebel force may help a government during negotiations leading to a post-conflict peace arrangement.[3] A group already experiencing internal conflict may be more likely to spawn spoiler groups. Spoiler groups can make enduring peace deals difficult if not impossible, as their entire reason for being is to undermine progress and to keep the conflict alive. A group that divides due to internal conflict may also create splinter groups that use violence[4] against

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[1] Jason Lyall, "Are Co-Ethnics More Effective Counter-Insurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 1 (February 2010): 1–20.

[2] Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 8 (August 2008): 1043–1068.

[3] Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, "Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 3 (July 2013): 659–672.

[4] Reed M. Wood and Jacob D. Kathman, "Competing for the Crown: Inter-Rebel Competition and Civilian Targeting in Civil War," *Political Research Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (March 2015): 167–179.

civilians and government targets to demonstrate that they continue to have credible force. This foreseeable negative consequence might serve as a counterargument to policy or military action which might increase internal conflict in groups.

For policymakers and military practitioners,[5] these nuances can be critical. A key part of understanding rebel groups, both from a counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare perspective, is in understanding the conditions under which they are more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict. This can be a symptom of dysfunction or of impending division.

B.   WHY STUDY MILITANT ETHNOPOLITICAL GROUPS?

Militant ethno-political groups stand at the nexus of several areas of national security concern: oppressive regimes, insurgencies, terrorist threats, and sectarian violence.   Their existence, failures, and successes can create human suffering, refugee crises, and threats to critical global resources.   Because history is replete with examples of rebel action and violence, and over 75% of contemporary conflict is civil,[6] or intra-state, rather than inter-state, there is a need to study the nature of these groups and how they behave under the influence of various internal and external factors.

Ethnicity also seems to be an aggravating factor in conflict. It may even be uniquely dangerous[7] among the many factors contributing to the onset, severity, and longevity of conflict.   Because ethnicity is a "sticky"[8] confluence of identity characteristics that may include race, religion, values, culture, and language, it can lend conflicts a particularly vicious and insoluble character. Scholars, policymakers, and military planners therefore need to better understand the logic underpinning how militant ethno-political groups form, how they justify and legitimize their use of violence to

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[5] Sean McClure, "Review of Paul Staniland: Networks of Rebellion," *Special Warfare Review* 27, no. 4 (October-December 2014): 27. The author describes military applications for Staniland's insights into rebel group behavior and dynamics.

[6] Wendy Pearlman and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, "Nonstate Actors, Fragmentation, and Conflict Processes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 3–15.

[7] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

8 Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 92.

achieve their ends, and the conditions which tend to unite them and to cause intra-organizational conflict.

From a government and military context in particular, counter-rebel or counterinsurgency doctrine and operations have been and continue to be important. Governments and militaries naturally need to understand militant ethno-political groups, especially when they act as insurgent forces against governments, in order to effectively conduct counterinsurgency.[9] Just as importantly, governments and militaries need to understand how to provide "support to insurgent forces"[10] from an unconventional warfare perspective.

C.   A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

1.   Research Question

What factors systematically affect the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict in militant ethno-political groups?

2.   Methodology

This study uses multiple regression models to examine the effects of a wide range of internal and external factors, on the probability of a intra-organizational conflict within militant ethno-political groups in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Examining the MENA region is of particular importance, given the U.S. 2015 National Security Strategy,[11] which indicates that one of the top five key goals of securing the international order is to "Seek Stability and Peace in the Middle East and North Africa." In the MENA region, we see one of the global economy's most critical energy sources threatened by multiple and long-standing oppressive regimes, insurgencies, terrorist threats, sectarian violence, human suffering, and refugee crises.

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[9] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, Joint Publication 3–24 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 22, 2013).

[10] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3–05 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 16, 2014).

[11] Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015).

3. Results of Interest

The results show that there is statistical evidence to support several hypotheses concerning the important drivers of the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict in militant MENA ethno-political groups. Foreign support, organizational legality, the attempt to control territory, a pro-authoritarian agenda, and a loss of leadership unity, are all shown to systematically increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. In contrast, state violence against the group does not appear to have a statistically significant effect. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the broader importance of these results, including how these findings comport with previous scholarship and theories, what they suggest for future research possibilities, and their implications for policymakers and military planners.

II. BACKGROUND AND THEORY

A. THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION FRAMEWORK

The essence of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, as originally introduced by Dollard et al. in 1939,[12] was later refined and applied to examining the causes of political violence by authors such as Ted Robert Gurr,[13] and Ivo and Rosalind Firabend.[14] Although these authors use slightly different formulations of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, we might summarize their views as follows:

> **Individuals and groups, frustrated in the attainment of goals, particularly when the frustration is perceived as a surprise, an injustice, or a relative deprivation, tend to use emotional and/or instrumental aggression against the perceived agents of frustration.**

The definition of "frustration" is "prevented from reaching a desired objective," and the definition of "aggression" is hostile emotional and/or instrumental use of force against a target person or group.[15] It is important to note that while individuals and groups experiencing frustration may very well have non-aggressive responses to that frustration, such as resignation or sublimation, the hypothesis here only applies to groups which have chosen the aggression response to frustration. In other words, this analysis examines the sub-set of cases in which the frustration-aggression pathway has in fact been followed, with aggression taking the form of either militant group behavior against the state, or intra-organizational conflict as a result of group dysfunction or intra-organizational frustration processes.

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[12] J. Dollard, L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, and R. R. Sears, *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Freer, 1939).

[13] Ted Robert Gurr, "Psychological Factors in Civil War," in *Anger, Violence, and Politics: Theories and Research,* ed. Ivo K. Feierabend, Rosalind L. Feierabend, and Ted Robert Gurr (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 31; Ted Robert Gurr, "A Causal Model of Strife: A Comparative Analysis Using New Indices," in *Anger, Violence, and Politics: Theories and Research,* ed. Ivo K. Feierabend, Rosalind L. Feierabend, and Ted Robert Gurr (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 184.

[14] Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, "Systemic Conditions of Political Aggression: An Application of Frustration-Aggression Theory," in *Anger, Violence, and Politics: Theories and Research,* ed. Ivo K. Feierabend, Rosalind L. Feierabend, and Ted Robert Gurr (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 136.

[15] Leonard Berkowitz, "Frustration-aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation," *Psychological Bulletin* 106, no. 1 (July 1989): 59–73.

That is, the hypothesis, as applied to intra-organizational conflict in militant MENA groups, is here applied on the state-versus-group level, and also at the group versus sub-group level. The hypothesis applies at the state versus group level in that the group is posited to be a manifestation of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Factors which support the logic and function of the group as a manifestation of the frustration-aggression hypothesis are therefore expected to reduce intra-organizational conflict. Factors which undermine or distract from the logic and rhetoric justifying the existence and militancy of the group, and factors which might trigger frustration-aggression responses within the militant group itself, are therefore expected to increase intra-organizational conflict.

If ethno-political groups turn to violence, the groups will often justify and explain their use of aggression as a consequence of being unfairly denied or frustrated in their attempts to gain their rightful access to needs or desires. A man who shakes and kicks a soda machine that stole his money is exemplifying the frustration-aggression dynamic at the individual level. A militant ethnopolitical group in MENA that uses violence against a state that it perceives to have unjustly denied its desires or needs is following the same dynamic at a collective or group level. If an organization has a charter, it may very well describe the nature of the frustrations it has experienced as one of its core justifications for aggression.

For example, the rebel American colonists, in the Declaration of Independence of 1776,[16] first described a list of rights unjustly denied by the crown, and the colonists' many frustrated non-violent attempts to seek redress of those grievances. Then, having laid out the injustices perpetrated by the crown and the frustrations resulting from non-violent attempts to achieve justice, the authors conclude that they are justified in using aggression against the crown; they declare independence and the intent to use violent resistance. The logic of frustration-aggression maps well to the logic of the document.

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[16] Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence," Historic American Documents, Lit2Go Edition, (1776), accessed October 16, 2016, http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/133/historic-american-documents/4957/the-declaration-of-independence/.

Similarly, the Hamas Covenant[17] declares that Palestine is being unjustly occupied by oppressive Zionists, that non-violent means to regain Palestine and to throw off oppression have been frustrated, and that therefore aggression is required. The same goes for the founding documents of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,[18] which describe how Western colonial powers divided the Islamic world following World War 1 and installed puppet regimes in order to suppress and frustrate all true practice of Islam. In the face of such longstanding oppression and frustration, these documents argue that the only way for true Islam to return to the world is to carve out a new Caliphate using violence. Indeed, the frustration-aggression logic is implicit in the foundational documents of all of these groups.

B.   EXISTING MODELS OF INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

Scholars such as Kathleen Cunningham,[19] Paul Staniland,[20,21] Wendy Pearlman,[22] and Christia Fontini[23] have studied factors such as organizational leadership structure, use of violence by and against groups, and dozens of other variables which are posited to impact the internal and external dynamics of rebel groups.   Also useful is the literature on Political Process Theory and the concept of changing "political opportunity structures,"[24] which provides insight into a tremendous and varied range of factors to

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17 "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS," Oxford Islamic Studies Online, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780195174304/islam-9780195174304-chapter-66 (accessed 15-Dec-2016).

18 Ahmed Hashim, "The Islamic State: From Al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," *Middle East Policy* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 70.

19 Kristin Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee Seymour, "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 2 (June 2012): 265–283.

20 Paul Staniland, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place; Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 16–40.

21 Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

22 Wendy Pearlman, "Precluding Nonviolence, Propelling Violence: The Effect of Internal Fragmentation on Movement Behavior," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 47, no. 1 (March 2012): 23–46.

23 Christia Fontini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

24 Robert D. Benford, David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (August 2000): 611–639.

consider when examining intra-group and inter-group dynamics. Other scholars have looked directly at effects of external competition[25] and external threats[26] on groups, and have found that they tend to reinforce group identities and even cohesion. Some of this work is predicated on identity theory concepts related to the formation, strengthening, and weakening of in-group and out-group bonds in response to various pressures.

More directly relevant to this analysis are the papers by Asal et al., and Warren and Troy, who looked specifically at dependent and independent variables similar to the variables of this paper, and in the same area of concern. Therefore, their work was most instrumental in generating the logic of this paper and in the interpretation of the findings.

Warren and Troy, in a 2015 paper,[27] looked at the sub-group and supra-group factors associated with ethnopolitical group violence. This paper, which includes data from both militant and non-militant organizations, posits that internal and external fragmenting and suppressing forces should affect the likelihood of internal conflict in a curvilinear manner when plotted against organization size. The paper posits that three factors: ethnic group size, strength of ethnic group cohesion, and democratic constraints against government action, should all impact the probability of group fragmentation. The authors use the Minorities at Risk dataset, augmented with data from other datasets to gain additional insight into such organizational and state features as the size of groups, ethnic cohesion strength, and democratic or autocratic nature of the government. Their primary finding is that the likelihood of group intra-organizational violence follows a curvilinear form when plotted against the size of the group as a proportion of the population, with a size of 25% of the population having the highest likelihood of violence. This peak is the "sweet spot" where the ratio of fragmenting forces to suppressing forces is highest.

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[25] Daan Scheepers et al., "The Social Functions of Ingroup Bias: Creating, Confirming, or Changing Social Reality," *European Review of Social Psychology* 17, no. 1 (July 2006): 359–96.

[26] Blake M. Riek et al., "Does a Common Ingroup Identity Reduce Intergroup Threat?," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 13, no.4 (June 2010): 403–423.

[27] Warren, T. Camber and Kevin K. Troy, "Explaining Violent Intra-Ethnic Conflict: Group Fragmentation in the Shadow of State Power," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 3 (April 2015): 484–509.

Asal et al., in a 2012 paper,[28] looked at the impact of united leadership, organizational legality, organizational use of violence, state use of violence, and external support to the organization on the likelihood of the group experiencing a split. Although the independent variables were different, the dependent variable was different, and the study included both militant and non-militant groups, the basic logic and methodology underlying the study is relatively close to what this paper is trying to accomplish. The study found that groups without a unified leadership were more likely to experience organizational split, but found no statistically-relevant results concerning the effects of state use of violence, foreign support or organizational legality.

C.   HYPOTHESES DERIVED FROM THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION FRAMEWORK

Using the frustration-aggression framework as the primary model for the dynamics of militant ethno-political group behavior, several external and internal variables are hypothesized to systematically affect the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. The definition of intra-organizational conflict utilized here focuses on the collective use of violence by members of the group against one another. This definition, while broad, has a high enough threshold of intensity for it to indicate a significant threat to the stability and operational effectiveness of the group. Therefore, intra-organizational conflict is of general interest to scholars, and of special interest to policymakers and military planners interested in the health and behavior of these groups.

Within the literature and in the available data, a number of potential independent variables can be hypothesized to have a predictable effect on intra-organizational conflict. I will discuss each in turn.

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[28] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethnopolitical Organizations in the Middle East," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 94–117.

1. Leadership Unity

Mainstream social movement theory[29] posits that centralized leadership reduces the likelihood of intra-organizational divides, and this protective effect might reasonably be expected to extend to reducing the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. A unified leadership might be less likely to engage in or to allow internal political struggles for the relative influence of different sub-factions within the organization, leading to fewer preconditions for organizational divides. If a group claims to exist as an external manifestation of one major frustration for the group, it seems group conflict might decrease with united leadership, because the group can more credibly claim to represent a coherent narrative, tactics, strategies, and desired end state to overcome that frustration. Competing or divided leadership can also increase organizational dysfunction and conflict, where sub-group leaders can play two-level games[30] such as tactically preserving their own resources at the expense of achieving the larger group's strategic objectives.[31] Divided or competing leadership structures are more likely to allow such defection and resource-hoarding activity, as they do not have a single dispassionate authority to track and punish the behavior equitably.

Although the above reasons might seem to suggest that a united leadership would tend to reduce the likelihood of a rebel group dividing, there are also plausible reasons why the reverse might be the case. Perhaps groups with a united leadership are less tolerant of any dissent, and therefore are more likely to purge or spin off sub-groups. Sub-groups with dissenting opinions might also be more likely to actively choose to divide from the group because they are not given the leeway to pursue their distinct agendas or strategies within the group. If this were the case, it might be that a divided leadership would actually decrease the probability of the group dividing, because the culture of the organization is more tolerant of dissent and alternative tactics and strategies

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[29] Deborah B. Balser, "The Impact of Environmental Factors on Factionalism and Schism in Social Movement Organizations." *Social Forces* 76, no. 1 (September 1997): 199–228.

[30] Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427–460.

[31] Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 59.

co-existing within the same "big tent" organizational structure. There have been instances, as in political parties, where organizations benefit from intentionally promoting the coexistence and struggles of divided leadership. Some advantages could include the ability of the divided group to

> target and attract different segments of the population, to provide participants with greater programmatic mobility, to offer flexibility for reorganization and interfactional coordination, and to accommodate the adoption of radical organizational tactics by factions without compromising the tactical doctrine of the original organization.[32]

While some of these benefits may accrue to the group, nevertheless, in accordance with the logic of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, it is hypothesized that by reinforcing the group's frustration-aggression hypothesis justification, this factor increases group unity and thereby decreases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. In addition, this framework implies that the impact of these divisions may be particularly severe when they represent recent shifts in leadership structures.

Hypothesis 1: **Unified leadership reduces the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

Hypothesis 1b: **A decline from unified leadership to divided leadership increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

2. Foreign Support

Foreign support might create resource battles within the group, or inject contradictory tactics, strategies, and end states into the group.[33] The mere injection of resources into the group can lead to the "curse of resources," with low-commitment recruits, jealousy, and morale problems. Just as the "curse of resources" may stunt the

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[32] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethnopolitical Organizations in the Middle East," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution 56*, no. 1 (February 2012): 95.

[33] Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

normal growth of states and increase their susceptibility to internal division or civil war, rebel groups also face these challenges.[34] Sometimes organizations realize that external support is a direct threat to their continued use of their primary narrative, as when *Action Directe* abandoned its external support relationship with the Red Army Faction after "realizing that the only joint attack perpetrated by the two organizations, in which an American serviceman was murdered, could tarnish its 'revolutionary' image."[35]

The change in overall resources or inequitable distribution of those resources could also cause the centrifugal forces of the group to overcome the centripetal forces holding it together. On the other hand, some organizations lack the organic resources to operate and are therefore mortally dependent on foreign support. For this unfortunate sub-set of groups, the many risks of internal conflict that come with foreign support entanglements and external agendas may be far preferable to the risks of having no resources at all.[36] Indeed, there is some evidence that, in the long run, the amount of aid to a group is positively correlated with its ability to persevere in conflict, despite the internal conflict that that foreign origin of the resources might cause.[37] In accordance with the logic of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, however, it is hypothesized that by undermining or distracting from the group's frustration-aggression hypothesis justification, this factor is likely to undermine group unity and thereby to increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

Hypothesis 2:   **Foreign support increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

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[34] Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 4 (August 2005): 598–624.

[35] Ely Karmon, *Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists, and Islamists* (Leiden: Martinujhoff, 2005), 293.

[36] Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 78.

[37] Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 288.

3. Legality

A militant ethnopolitical group, when legally recognized by the state, may have more difficulty in justifying its existence through the frustration/aggression narrative. As discussed in recent work by Cederman[38] and several[39] co-authors,[40] groups are more likely to engage in violent rebellion when they are excluded from political power or even the political process itself. When an organization is legal, it also has broader "political opportunity structures,"[41] and this may put the militant group in the position of having to continually justify its use of violence despite its access to non-violent and more generally accepted legal avenues to pursue its aims. The organization is under greater pressure internally and externally to lay down its arms and transition to legitimate and peaceful politics. In accordance with the logic of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, it is hypothesized that by undermining or distracting from the group's frustration-aggression justification, this factor undermines group unity and thereby increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

Hypothesis 3:   **Organization legality increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

4. State Use of Violence

A militant ethnopolitical group might be helped, in a fashion, by state violence. The group, when attacked by members of an "other" ethnopolitical identity, might actually enjoy a strengthening of identity and internal resolve to work together against the common enemy of the state. A group-strengthening effect has been observed in cases

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[38] Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis," *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (January 2010): 87-119.

[39] Lars-Erik Cederman, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug, *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[40] Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set," *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 2 (April 2009): 316-337.

[41] Robert D. Benford, David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (August 2000): 611–639.

where a general threat or competition has driven a group to reinvigorate its internal bonds and identity.[42] Conversely, the violence could cause the group enough combat losses to increase internal conflict or to entirely destroy the organization.[43] Losses could trigger a significant change in power dynamics between the sub-groups, leading to one or more sub-groups clashing with other sub-groups to re-establish a hierarchy of power or to punish those responsible for an embarrassing loss. In accordance with the logic of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, however, it is hypothesized that by reinforcing the group's frustration-aggression hypothesis justification, this factor increases group unity and thereby decreases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

Hypothesis 4: **State use of violence against a group reduces the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

5. Territorial Control

If an organization predicated on the notion of frustration-aggression attempts to control territory and engage in governance, it risks being seen as incompetent, being attacked by the state, and losing its narrative as a pure anti-establishment phenomenon. It then has to defend its own establishment. When a rebel group is actively attempting to control territory, there is evidence to suggest that any gains or losses of territory will tend to increase internal conflict and even lead to group division.[44] Conversely, some organizations like Hamas might experience a net benefit, despite the difficulties, from engaging in control and governance functions in a territory by building national and international support through services and propaganda. In accordance with the logic of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, it is hypothesized that by undermining or

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[42] Daan Scheepers et al., "The Social Functions of Ingroup Bias: Creating, Confirming, or Changing Social Reality," *European Review of Social Psychology* 17, no. 1 (July 2006): 359–96. See also: Blake M. Riek et al., "Does a Common Ingroup Identity Reduce Intergroup Threat?," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 13, no. 4 (June 2010): 403–23. The authors argue that external competition and external threats tend to reinforce group identities and even cohesion.

[43] Christia Fontini, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[44] Michael H. Woldemariam, "Why Rebels Collide: Factionalism and Fragmentation in African Insurgencies," (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2011).

distracting from the group's frustration-aggression hypothesis justification, this factor undermines group unity and thereby increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

> **Hypothesis 5:** **Attempting to control or govern territory increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

6. Pro-authoritarian

A pro-authoritarian agenda might predispose a group to conflict. A group that identifies itself as a movement to fight against unfair oppression of a minority group might have a difficult time justifying its own autocratic practices and plans for autocratic governance in the future. For example, the organization *Action Directe* experienced a major internal conflict and even divided in 1982 over excessively directive and intolerant leadership. A sub-group complained that the leader had been excessively "authoritarian"[45] in his management of the group. Zarqawi of al-Qaeda in Iraq also seems to have fallen afoul of this principle in 2006.[46] By undermining the group's frustration-aggression hypothesis justification, we can expect that this factor undermines group unity.

> **Hypothesis 6:** **Advocating authoritarian policies and ideologies increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.**

Table 1 summarizes these hypothesized relationships. In short, a group which enjoys united leadership, and which faces state violence, might experience less intra-organizational conflict, as these factors support the logic that the group is a well-organized and unified manifestation of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, and that the

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[45] Ely Karmon, *Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists, and Islamists* (Leiden: Martinujhoff, 2005), 141.

[46] Brian Fishman, "After Zarqawi: The Dilemmas and Future of Al Qaeda in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 19–32.

group is morally justified in its militancy by the state's violent oppression against the group.

Table 1.   Summary of Hypothesized Effects of Independent Variables on the Likelihood of Intra-Organizational Conflict

	Independent Variable	Effect on Likelihood of Intra-organizational Conflict
1	Leadership Unity	Decrease
1b.	Drop in Leadership Unity	Increase
2	Foreign Support	Increase
3	Legal	Increase
4	State Violence	Decrease
5	Controls Territory	Increase
6	Pro-Authoritarian	Increase

However, foreign support, organizational legality, the attempt to control territory, and a group pro-authoritarian agenda are hypothesized to increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. That is because these factors would undermine or distract from the logic and rhetoric of the groups as legitimate and focused manifestations of the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Foreign support injects foreign interference and conflicting agendas within the group, and may attract low-commitment and profiteering membership. Organizational legality undercuts a group's logical and rhetorical claims that militancy is the only recourse to the injustice. The attempt to control and govern territory introduces the demand to deliver security and good governance under scrutiny, exposes the group to accusations of hypocrisy if it cannot deliver, renders the group more

easily isolated and targeted by air and other conventional operations. Finally, a group with a pro-authoritarian agenda is likely to create its own frustration-aggression problems internally, as authoritarian groups which suppress dissent, especially when they are already composed of individuals accustomed, trained, and equipped to do violence, are more likely to see that suppressed dissent generate frustration and eventually violent intra-organizational aggression.

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III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is intended to contribute to the literature on rebel group intra-organizational conflict and divide, particularly for militant ethno-political groups in the MENA region. The approach taken here has been to identify factors examined in previous literature, and then to examine them quantitatively to identify whether there is statistical evidence to support various hypotheses about the factors that may affect the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. Having identified an overarching theoretical model, having identified some factors which should affect the likelihood of groups experiencing intra-organizational conflict, and having identified the whether these factors should increase or decrease the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict, these hypotheses are tested against a large dataset describing militant Middle Eastern and North African ethno-political group behavior over time. By focusing on militant ethno-political groups in the Middle East and North Africa from 1980–2004, the findings are likely to be applicable to ongoing and future efforts to understand and to affect intra-organizational conflict within that geopolitically-important and embattled region of the world.

For all of the statistical models reported below, the R programming language[47] was used to ingest datasets, recode variables, created models, and produce statistical analysis as needed. Using this open source program allows detailed analysis of the coding choices used and allows for easy study replication and improved analysis in the future.

A. THE MAROB DATA SET

The Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior dataset, directed by the researchers at the University of Maryland and the University at Albany, is funded through grants from the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Air Force, and the National Science Foundation. The stated purpose of the MAROB dataset, which is a branch of the Minorities at Risk dataset, is to aid research into the identifying "factors that motivate

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[47] R Core Team, *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*, R Foundation for Statistical Computing, 2016. https://www.R-project.org.

some members of ethnic minorities to become radicalized, to form activist organizations, and to move from conventional means of politics and protest into violence and terrorism."[48] It includes 118 ethnopolitical organizations, and is coded by the organization-year unit of analysis. Organizations are incorporated into the database if they are active for three consecutive years, have political goals and activities, and "explicitly claim to represent the interests of "one or more ethnic groups and/or the organization's members are primarily members of a specific ethnic minority."[49] The date range for the dataset is 1980 to 2004.

Only those groups which are coded as "militant" in the dataset are included in this analysis. A "militant" group is defined as a group which uses violence and weapons, or the threat to use violence and weapons, as a means to achieve its objectives. The resulting dataset for use in this study includes 66 militant ethnopolitical organizations in 11 countries. The total number of observations, using the organization-year unit of analysis, is 1125 observations. All independent variables are lagged by one year to reduce the risk of endogeneity or reverse causation between dependent and independent variables.

The majority of observations concern militant ethno-political organizations in the countries of Lebanon (445 observations), Iraq (309), Israel (145), Jordan (60), and Morocco (25). There are a total of 91 observations in countries other than the top five listed. The data are clearly weighted heavily in favor of groups in Lebanon and Iraq, and the results should be seen in light of this sensitivity. Organization-years per ethnic group represented include Palestinian (441 observations), Kurds (225), Shi-is (203), Sunnis (134), Maronite Christians (37), and Alawi (25). See Figure 1 for a depiction of the MENA region.

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[48] Victor Asal, Amy Pate and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior Data and Codebook Version 9/2008* (2008), accessed online at http://www.mar.umd.edu/data.asp.

[49] Victor Asal, Amy Pate and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior Data and Codebook Version 9/2008* (2008), accessed online at http://www.mar.umd.edu/data.asp.

Figure 1.   Map of the Middle East and North Africa Region[50]
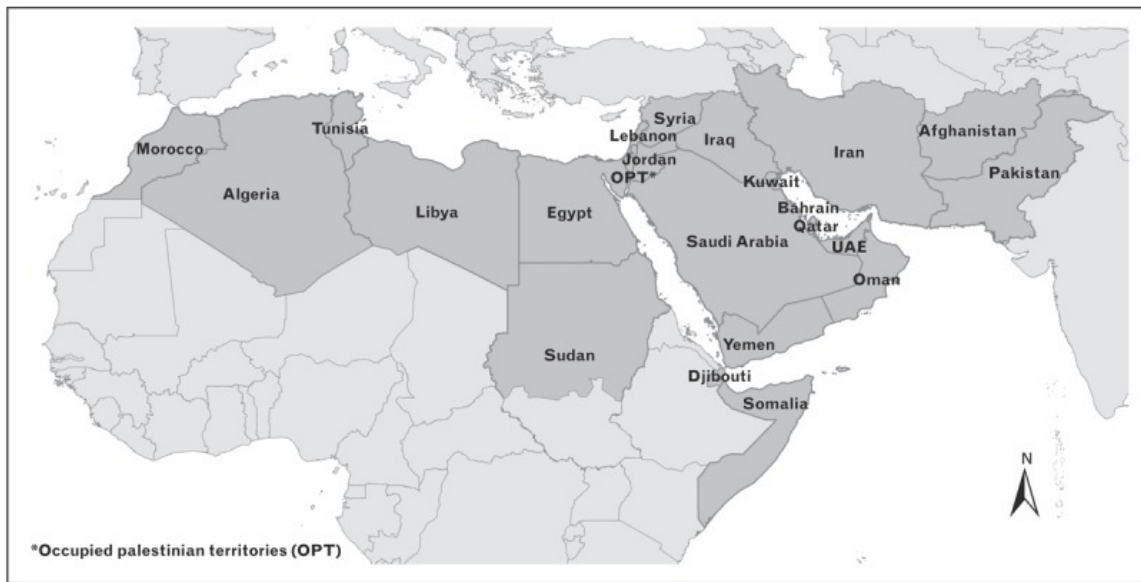
B.   IDENTIFYING, DESCRIBING, AND PREPARING VARIABLES FOR TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

1.   Dependent Variable: Intra-Organizational Conflict

The dependent variable is coded dichotomously, and an organization is considered to experience *Intra-Organizational Conflict* if it experiences sporadic unarmed violent clashes, rioting, armed fighting, assassinations, bombings, or other uses of violence against intra-organizational targets. In 2.2% of the observations, organizations experienced intra-organizational conflict according to this definition. Note that the definition of intra-organizational conflict for the rest of this document will consistently mean the use of violence, and not merely argumentation and disagreement.

2.   Independent Variables

The variables *Pro-Authoritarian*, *Controls Territory*, *Leadership Unity*, *Legal*, *State Violence*, and *Foreign Support* are all coded dichotomously. A pairwise correlation

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[50] Ghina R. Mumtaz, Gabriele Riedner, and Laith J. Abu-Raddad, "The Emerging Face of the HIV Epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa," *Current Opinion in HIV and AIDS* 9, no. 2 (2014): 183–191.

matrix, which is used to identify independent variables with multicollinearity or other confounding logical relationships, reveals that the largest correlation coefficient is -0.358 between *State Violence* and *Legal*. This moderate negative correlation seems to make sense, as one would expect states to less frequently employ violence against groups with legally-recognized status. The moderate 0.252 positive correlation between *State Violence* and *Controls Territory* might be seen as a normal state reaction to the usurpation of state territorial sovereignty. Similarly, the moderate negative correlation of -0.235 between a group attempting to *Control Territory* and having *Legal* status may also make sense, as militant groups attempting to *Control Territory* may be more likely to have shakier claims to *Legal* status. There are several smaller positive and negative correlations between the other variables, but none are large enough (for example, a correlation over 0.500) to warrant additional scrutiny to discern whether there are possible confounding logical relationships like multicollinearity. Where each variable listed on the y-axis intersects with the same variable on the x-axis, the correlation is 1.000, as the data are identical and perfectly correlated. See Table 2 for correlation matrix results.

Table 2.   Pairwise Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables

	Leadership Unity	Foreign Support	Legal	State Violence	Controls Territory	Pro-Authoritarian
Leadership Unity	1.000					
Foreign Support	0.022	1.000				
Legal	0.172	-0.104	1.000			
State Violence	-0.003	0.191	-0.358	1.000		
Controls Territory	0.032	0.194	-0.235	0.252	1.000	
Pro-Authoritarian	0.038	-0.187	0.030	0.023	-0.034	1.000

An organization is defined as *Pro-Authoritarian* if the organization advocates authoritarian forms of government. In 10% of the observations, organizations were P*ro-Authoritarian*. An organization *Controls Territory* if it attempts to control and/or govern territory for purposes of security or even to attempt independence. In 20% of the

observations, organizations attempted to control movement in a defined territory or attempted to set up governance and infrastructure within that territory. An organization has *Leadership Unity* if it has a strong ruling council or a strong single leader. In 85% of the observations, organizations exhibited *Leadership Unity*. An organization is *Legal* if it enjoys some amount of legal recognition and legitimacy from the state. In 50% of the observations, organizations are coded this way. An organization is coded as experiencing S*tate Violence* if the state uses lethal violence against the organization sometimes or regularly. This occurred in 22% of the observations. Finally, the *Foreign Support* variable records whether a group receives any combination of support from diaspora, foreign states, international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, or cross-border insurgency allies. In 50% of the observations, organizations received *Foreign Support*.

C.   MODEL SPECIFICATIONS

The models estimated below are multivariate logistic models with independent variables lagged one year to reduce the risks of the endogeneity and reverse causation problems. The first model incorporates the independent variables as static values, while the second model incorporates the leadership value as a drop, or step down, from *Leadership Unity* to divided leadership. This second model looks for the effects of a change in leadership type, rather than looking for the effects of a static leadership type.

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IV. RESULTS

The results support the statistical significance and the substantive significance of several variables, as detailed here.

A. STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The results show a statistically significant effect for *Foreign Support*, *Legal*, *Controls Territory*, and *Pro-Authoritarian*. There did not appear to be a statistically significant result for *Leadership Unity* or *State Violence* (see Table 3).

Table 3.   Logit Regression Results: Conflict vs. Leadership Level

Factors Affecting Intra-Organizational Conflict in Militant Ethnopolitical Organizations	
Dependent Variable: Intra-Organizational Conflict in the Following Year	
Binomial Logit Analysis	
Leadership Unity	-0.618 (0.608)
Foreign Support	1.362^{**} (0.605)
Legal	1.807^{***} (0.577)
State Violence	0.660 (0.551)
Controls Territory	1.935^{***} (0.477)
Pro-Authoritarian	1.236^{**} (0.614)
Constant	-6.208^{***} (0.922)
Observations	876
Log Likelihood	-93.986
Akaike Inf. Crit.	201.972
Residual Deviance	187.972 (df = 869)
Null Deviance	227.104 (df = 875)
Note:	$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

The findings of the initial model are shown in Table 3 and summarized in Table 4. The model indicates that while the *Leadership Unity* and *State Violence* variables did not produce statistically significant results, the other variables did. First, the model shows

that groups with *Foreign Support* are systematically more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict, with a *p*-value of <0.05. In addition, groups with *Legal* status are systematically more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict, with a p-value of <0.01. If an organization *Controls Territory*, it is systematically more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict, with a p-value of <0.01, and the *Pro-Authoritarian* factor makes groups systematically more likely to experience an increase in intra-organizational conflict with a p-value of <0.05.

Table 4.   Results of Testing Hypotheses Using First Model

	Independent Variable	Predicted Effect on Intra-organizational Conflict	Results
1	Leadership Unity	Decrease	No Statistically Significant Finding
2	Foreign Support	Increase	Increase
3	Legal	Increase	Increase
4	State Violence	Decrease	No Statistically Significant Finding
5	Controls Territory	Increase	Increase
6	Pro-Authoritarian	Increase	Increase

In the second model, the *Drop in Leadership Unity* variable shows the effects of a drop in leadership, from unified to divided, on intra-organizational conflict in the following year. Table 5 and Table 6 results indicate that organizations experiencing a drop in *Leadership Unity* are systematically more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict, with a p-value of <0.05.

This finding concerning the effects of a drop in *Leadership Unity* on intra-organizational conflict is similar to the results reported by Asal when examining the effects of leadership structures on the likelihood of an organization splitting.[51] The different effects on the dependent variable of steady-state divided leadership versus a drop in *Leadership Unity* into divided leadership might be explained because both a

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[51] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethno-Political Organizations in the Middle East," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 94–117.

divided leadership style and a united leadership style, when stable, can each provide benefits to the organization. As described above, and as found by Asal in his examination of the literature associated with leadership effects on schism, there are some potential advantages to a divided leadership structure. However, these benefits, if any, would have to be balanced against the increased risk of intra-organizational conflict.[52] Also, a sudden *Drop in Leadership Unity* is likely to be associated with an emergency or dysfunction within the group. A drop is therefore more likely to be followed by intra-organizational conflict or even group division than by the sudden appearance of divided leadership benefits.

Table 5.   Logit Regression Results: Conflict vs. Leadership Change

Factors Affecting Intra-Organizational Conflict in Militant Ethnopolitical Organizations	
	Dependent Variable: Intra-Organizational Conflict in the Following Year
	Binomial Logit Analysis
Drop in Leadership Unity	1.687^{**} (0.670)
Foreign Support	1.448^{**} (0.608)
Legal	1.741^{***} (0.567)
State Violence	0.607 (0.555)
Controls Territory	1.846^{***} (0.490)
Pro-Authoritarian	1.215^{**} (0.620)
Constant	-6.907^{***} (0.819)
Observations	978
Log Likelihood	-93.475
Akaike Inf. Crit.	200.951
Residual Deviance	186.951 (df = 971)
Null Deviance	232.687 (df = 977)
Note:	$^{*}p<0.1;\ ^{**}p<0.05;\ ^{***}p<0.01$

As with the first model, this second model again produces statistical evidence that seems to support both the importance and the hypothesized direction of influence of each

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[52] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethno-Political Organizations in the Middle East," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 95.

of the independent variables, except for the use of state violence, as summarized in Table 6. Again, the insignificant coefficient for *State Violence* evidence provides no support for Hypothesis 4, indicating instead that *State Violence* has no consistent effect on the likelihood of intra-organizanic conflict.

Table 6.   Results of Testing Hypotheses Using Second Model

	Independent Variable	Predicted Effect on Intra-organizational Conflict	Results
1b.	Drop in Leadership Unity	Increase	Increase
2	Foreign Support	Increase	Increase
3	Legal	Increase	Increase
4	State Violence	Decrease	No Statistically Significant Finding
5	Controls Territory	Increase	Increase
6	Pro-Authoritarian	Increase	Increase

B.   SUBSTANTIVE SIGNIFICANCE

Having found a high level of statistical significance for the factors *Drop in Leadership Unity*, *Foreign Support*, *Legal*, *Controls Territory*, and *Pro-Authoritarian*, how might we quantify their effects on the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict? Do they show substantive significance in addition to statistical significance? The effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable are visualized in Figure 2.

Figure 2.   Size of Effect for a Shift of Each Independent Variable
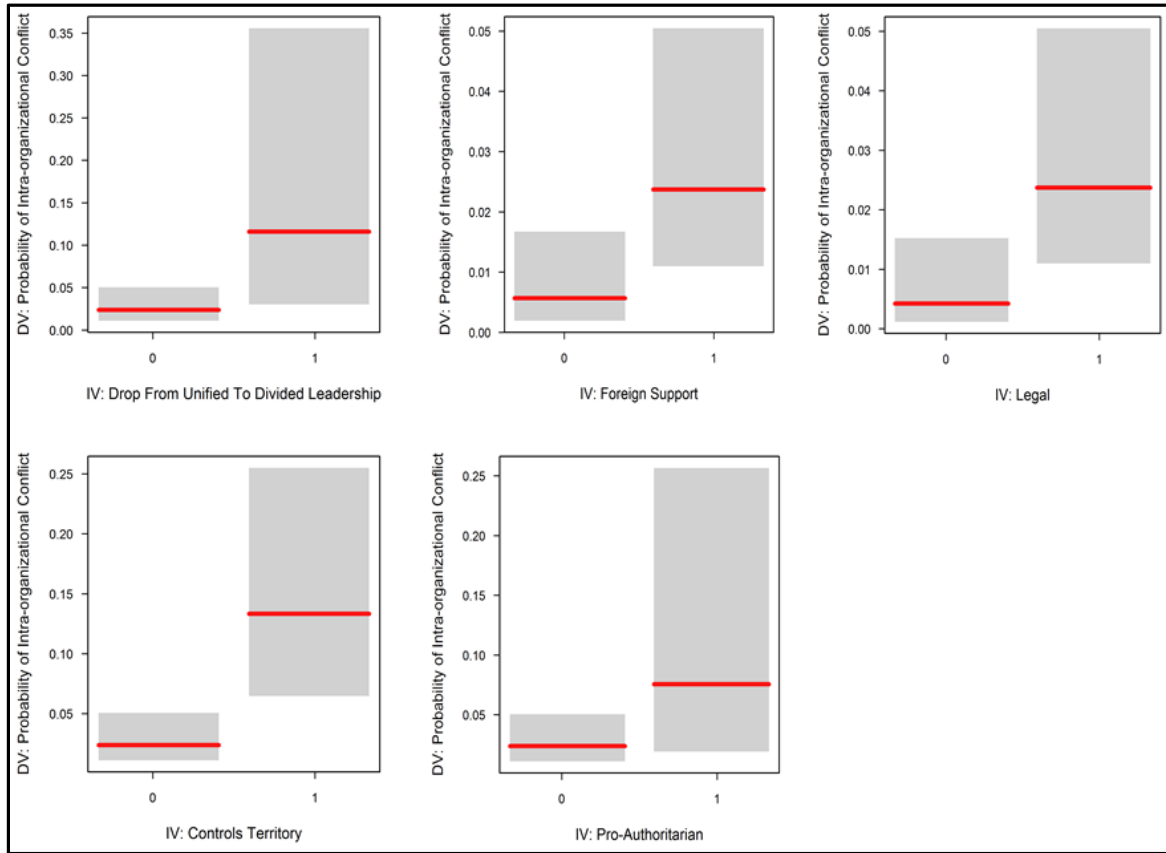
The results show that while the independent variables differ in the strength of their effect on the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict (the horizontal line through each bar), and in their confidence intervals (the size of the gray bars), all of the statistically-significant independent variables also show a substantively-significant effect on the likelihood of the dependent variable. As we can see in Figure 2, a shift in the factor *Drop in Leadership United* causes a 600% increase in a group's likelihood of experiencing internal conflict in the next year, or a change from about 2% percent to 12%. *Foreign Support* and *Legal* both increased the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict by about 400%, or a change from about 0.5% to 2.5% in the next year. The variable *Controls Territory* increased the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict by about 500%, or a change from about 2% to 13% likelihood. Finally, the variable Pro-Authoritarian increased the likelihood by 250%, or from about 2% to about 7%.

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C.   STRENGTH OF SUPPORT TO HYPOTHESES

In summary, the results indicate that the variables *Drop in Leadership Unity, Foreign Support, Legal, Controls Territory, and Pro-Authoritarian* variables impact the dependent variable in a statistically significant and substantively significant way. See Table 7.

Table 7.   Summary of Results

	Independent Variable	Predicted Effect on Intra-organizational Conflict	Results	Statistical Significance (p-value)	Substantive Significance
1b.	Drop in Leadership Unity	Increase	Increase	<0.05	+500%
2	Foreign Support	Increase	Increase	<0.05	+400%
3	Legal	Increase	Increase	<0.01	+400%
4	State Violence	Decrease	No Statistically Significant Finding	N/A	N/A
5	Controls Territory	Increase	Increase	<0.01	+500%
6	Pro-Authoritarian	Increase	Increase	<0.05	+250%

V. CONCLUSIONS

A. DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis reported here generally support the hypotheses derived from the logic of the frustration-aggression model. In particular, I find that *Foreign Support*, *Organizational Legality*, *Territorial Control*, and *Pro-Authoritarian* ideologies all increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

The results do not support the hypothesis that *Leadership Unity* reduces the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. However, the results do support the hypothesis that a recent shift from united to divided leadership does increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. This may be due to the destabilizing effect of a sudden change in leadership dynamics. While there may be reasons for organizations to deliberately choose a divided leadership structure, a sudden change from united to divided leadership may indicate that the change was not calculated, and that even if calculated may trigger increased intra-organizational violence. It is also interesting that although *State Violence* did not reduce group intra-organizational conflict as hypothesized, it also did not have the opposite effect. This finding may indicate that the strategy of using state violence against militant ethno-political groups has no discernable effect on intra-organizational conflict, that the effects are roughly balanced in either direction in a bimodal or other complex distribution, that the dataset examined is too small to detect the effect, or that the model as constructed is somehow ill-designed to capture the effect. These possibilities suggest areas for further research.

B. COMPARING WITH PREVIOUS FINDINGS

The most directly comparable findings in the literature, particularly as they apply to ethnopolitical groups in the MENA region, are from Asal et al., in which several similar independent variables and a similar dependent variable were examined. The dependent variable for Asal et al. was organizational split, while the dependent variable in this thesis is intra-organizational conflict. The definition of an organizational split is very narrowly defined to be an event where one MAR group spawns another. The bar is

set very high for this event to occur. First, a group only qualifies as a MAR group if it comprises at least one percent of the population and has at least 100,000 members. A split is only said to have occurred if a new group emerges from an existing group, the new group fully qualifies as a MAR group on its own, and the new group continues to exist for at least three years.[53] One can imagine cases in which MAR groups, especially small ones, might not produce large enough splinter groups to meet the definition. Also, the new groups might not last over three years. If either of those possibilities occurs, the split is not counted. Therefore, under the Asal et al. approach, a group may experience a tremendous amount of intra-organizational conflict, may lose small splinter groups that are never counted, may lose large splinter groups that do not exist long enough to be counted, and may even go through multi-splinter episodes below the defined threshold without registering any occurrences of the dependent variable event. When comparing the results of the Asal et al. paper and this thesis, these differences between the dependent variables should be kept in mind.

Despite these significant differences between the dependent variables, one can imagine that both dependent variables might be sensitive to similar independent variables in similar ways. The same factors which systematically increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict might be expected to have the same effect on the likelihood of organizational divide. However, the findings are mixed when the papers are compared. Both studies found that groups with a lack of united leadership were more likely to experience organizational split or intra-organizational conflict, respectively. In addition, neither study found statistically significant results concerning the effects of state violence directed against militant groups. However, Asal found no statistically significant result when modeling whether foreign support or legal status affected the likelihood of splits, while this study found that both factors increased the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. Asal et al. did not look at the effects of territorial control, or the effects of pro-authoritarian ideologies. However, this paper found that both of those factors did have statistically significant effects in increasing the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict.

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[53] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethno-Political Organizations in the Middle East," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 104.

The results, while not entirely consistent and not entirely overlapping, could still be seen as relatively compatible. One might imagine that Asal et al. found no statistically significant results for the effects of foreign support or legal status due to the stricter dependent variable they used. If one imagines that an organization splitting is the worst case scenario along the scale of possible types of intra-organizational conflict, then one might expect it to occur less frequently. Therefore, the data set might not have contained an adequate number of instances where the dependent variable occurred to produce a statistically significant result.

However, this line of logic does is not persuasive. Asal et al. report that their dependent variable occurred in just under 3% of their organization-years,[54] and in this paper the dependent variable occurs in even fewer, or 2.2% of organization-years.

Perhaps the difference in results could be attributed to the fact that the Asal et al. paper uses a sample of both militant and non-militant groups, while this paper uses only militant groups. Why would these factors systematically increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict among militant MENA ethnopolitical groups, but have no statistically-significant systematic effect on the likelihood that a broader population of militant and non-militant MENA ethno-political groups will split?

C.   APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

There are several ways to translate these findings into implications for policy and military action. For example, a policy or action that causes a drop in the degree of leadership unity (such as decapitation or otherwise provoking a contested leadership environment) should systematically increase the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. In addition, foreign support should be understood to have potential intentional or unintentional effects of manipulating a group's agenda, disproportionately aiding some sub-groups over others, and attracting low-commitment or profiteering recruits. All of these dynamics may increase intra-organizational conflict. Manipulating the legal status of a militant ethnopolitical group also seems to hold promise for those who seek to affect

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[54] Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Angela Dalton, "Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethno-Political Organizations in the Middle East," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 106.

a group's level of intra-organizational conflict. A policymaker or military planner may create or emphasize legal, nonviolent paths for ethnopolitical groups to make progress towards stated goals. If an organization is given legal options, this may help to "steal the issue" from militant groups claiming to provide the only path to change. Legal paths for reintegration and amnesty may increase internal conflict by undermining the logic and rhetoric justifying the group's continued existence and its continued use of violence. Also, increasing the group's perception that its leadership is authoritarian and intolerant of dissent, or causing the leadership to act that way, may increase conflict by generating frustration and aggression processes within the organization.

Finally, a militant organization that finds itself challenged to control territory might be racked by the difficulty and expense of security and governance, may fight internally over resource allocation and the hypocrisy of its failures as an alternative to the state, and may as a result become an easier target for isolation and conventional operations. The Jihadist strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, in addition to recommending against a traditional hierarchy and for moving to acephalous organizational structure, also recommended against the attempt to control or govern territory because he observed that it would make Jihadist organizations too easy to isolate and target through air or other conventional operations.[55] It seemed to al-Suri that a Jihadist group under isolation and defending itself from conventional armed forces attack might be less likely to achieve its strategic aims, and more likely to struggle with intra-organizational conflict over the cost, complexities, and dangers of defending, controlling, and governing territory. The results presented here thus lend support to Al Suri's analysis.

D.   DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study applied a certain set of assumptions and coding predicated upon a certain logic, there are many other permutations of model specifications that could be applied to the same data sets. In order to increase confidence in the findings of this paper, additional work could be done using different and more complex modeling and analysis techniques. For example, the models in this paper examine the statistical

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[55] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance* (2004): Ch.8, Secs. 5-6.

evidence for whether there is a conditionally monotonic and linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Examining the variables in the light of other models and other possible relationships could reveal more nuanced or even different results.

In attempting to identify the conditions under which militant ethnopolitical groups are more likely to experience intra-organizational conflict, there are certainly other established models of political movements, conflict theories, and other frameworks around which to build hypotheses and to analyze the data. Even using the same model and the same framework of analysis, other data sets from different or larger regions, or coding group characteristics and factors in different ways, may yield different results. In any of these cases, further research would be illuminating.

The finding that united leadership provided no systematic decrease in intra-organizational conflict may support the contention that organizations may exist in either condition in a steady state without a major impact on intra-organizational conflict. This comports with the political science insight that while united leadership has its advantages, a divided leadership strategy might have some as well. It might provide a "big tent" organization style allowing for a more diverse membership and preventing the frustrations and conflict associated with the internal policing of minor dissent.[56] On the other hand, the findings do show that a sudden drop in leadership unity systematically increases the likelihood of intra-organizational conflict. This finding is similar to the Asal et al. finding that divided leadership tends to increase the likelihood of organizational divide, but is limited to the cases in which a drop in leadership unity occurred.

Finally, the finding that state violence against a group does not appear to increase or decrease intra-organizational conflict may indicate that ethno-political groups in particular have a capacity to absorb state violence without experiencing the type of

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[56] Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik, *The External Control of Organizations* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

internal conflict that might otherwise be expected. Perhaps just as the "sticky"[57] nature of ethnicity can create centuries-long rivalries and resentments, it may also lend ethnopolitical groups a particularly durable quality under certain circumstances and under certain pressures, such as state violence.

For policy makers and military planners, this implies that our understanding of the effects of state violence on group morale and cohesion may need to be reexamined and refined. If state violence actually succeeds in destroying a group, then the degree of intra-organizational conflict it generates becomes irrelevant. However, in cases where state violence does not destroy a group, the effect on the group's intra-organizational conflict level should give us pause. Indeed, the finding that state use of violence against militant MENA ethno-political groups may not systematically affect intra-organizational conflict seems to echo the findings of scholars like Robert A. Pape, who contends that a more careful examination of the evidence supporting the use of strategic bombing as a tool of coercion reveals historical evidence of its surprisingly frequent failures.[58] Just as Pape revealed some counterintuitive but useful findings through the examination of historic conflict data, perhaps this thesis can also contribute some minor insights useful to current and future research into the intersection of political violence, rebel groups, ethnic conflict, and the Middle East and North Africa region.

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[57] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 92.

[58] Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

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